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The Hidden Well

CYCLE 1

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Prologue

Prologue – The Forest's Pact

The forest did not resist you. It bent to your presence. Branches shifted as you passed, letting in enough light to guide your steps. Roots that would trip another man seemed to sink into the soil before your boots touched them.

You had walked these paths long before the well was dug, before the first crank ever twitched in the shadows. Your bond with the wild was older than the infection, older than the cycle itself. The animals were not compelled, but because they had chosen you as their voice.

And because of that, nothing born of the well could touch you.

One

Chapter 1 – The Fourteen

The well, hidden deep in the forest's heart, under a snarl of creepers so thick they looked like the forest's own skin. A barricade of stone and timber sealed its mouth, as if the earth itself had tried to bury it.

Inside: fourteen people. Nine still themselves — pale, frightened, clinging to the hope of rescue. Five already zombies — their mouths twitching with half-formed words that made no sense.

Above them stood your successor — same height, same build, same stance. But richer. His clothes were immaculate, and his aura was heavy, like a storm cloud that had learned to walk.

"Clear it," he ordered, his voice low but carrying. His friends hesitated glancing below, but began removing the creepers and

the barricade. The sound of splintering wood echoed through the trees.

Two

Chapter 2 – The First Man

The first man to climb out was panting, his hands raw and bleeding from the climb. He reached for the successor's hand and clasped it in his own.
The successor didn't flinch.

Nothing happened.
Not yet.

The man staggered toward the villa, disappearing into its halls without a word.

Though he didn't know why, the successor felt a sense of foreboding and the thrill of
adventure rush through his veins.

Three

Chapter 3 – The Villa

The villa was vast and cold, its marble floors echoing with every step. Dust motes drifted in the shafts of light that cut through tall windows. Inside, two figures lingered — the "idiot" and his brother (or his closest friend).

They spoke to each other in the hall, their words too low to catch, their eyes moving
toward the door as if waiting for something.

The successor entered, scanning the room. The idiotic duo was there. But the first man — the one who had touched his hand — was nowhere. Not in the hall. Not outside. Not among the cranks. It was as if he had never climbed out at all.

Four

Chapter 4 – The Spread

Outside, the friends ignored the successor's orders and let more people out. The infection spread quickly — too quickly. The unaffected screamed as the cranks lunged at them (their movements jerky but unstoppable). The villa's halls filled with the sound of pounding feet, shattering glass, and the low, guttural noises of the infected.

The successor ran toward the long corridor at the back of the villa — the only place that could be barricaded. He saw the duo; he screamed at them to go hide, but they pretended like he was part of the wall. He ran like his life depended on him running(which, for once, it did)…

Five

Chapter 5 – The Eagle's Errand

Halfway there, he stopped at a tall, arched window. Above the courtyard, an eagle circled, its wings slicing the air with a sound like tearing cloth.

He cupped his hands to his mouth and shouted:

"Go! Make sure they don't let them all out! If they have... take my uninfected friends to a safe place!"

The eagle tilted its head mid-flight, listening. Then it banked, moving quickly, and vanished into the clouds.

Six

Chapter 6 – The Corridor

The successor reached the corridor and slammed the barricade into place. The pounding began almost immediately — fists, claws, something else. The voices outside called his name, coaxing him to open the door. Their tones were wrong now — too smooth, too eager. He saw doors open and close on their own accord…Were there more secrets to this villa?

Above, the eagle cried out — a sharp, piercing sound. It was returning.

Seven

Chapter 7 – The Missing Man

The eagle landed on the sill, a scrap of fabric in its talons — torn from the shirt of the first man. The man wasn't among the cranks because he was somewhere else. Somewhere the eagle could go, but the successor could not.

The bird's gaze was urgent.

It wanted him to follow.

Eight

Chapter 8 – The Clearing

The eagle led him through the forest to a clearing. The missing man stood there, alive, unchanged… but his eyes were wrong.

"When I touched you," the man said, "I saw it. The thing inside you. The thing that calls the animals. It's the first stage."

Before the successor could answer, the sky split.

A jagged bolt of lightning slammed into the ground behind him — so close it should have burned him to ash. Instead, he stood untouched, his silhouette framed in blinding white. The shock-wave rippled outward, making the trees bow and the cranks flinch.

And then it happened.

Behind him, the air began to twist — a swirling vortex of black and silver energy. Not a mimic. Not a copy. **The Sudarshana**

Chakra itself. It spun faster and faster, arcs of light snapping off it, until it formed a perfect, roaring disc. The animals lowered their heads in reverence. The cranks whimpered. Even the missing man took a step back.

And then — *you spoke through the successor*.

Your voice echoed across the clearing, layered over his own, ancient and commanding:

> *"Go and reseal yourself in the well; cover it well... better than it was when I uncovered it. No one should be able to discover it."*

The cranks and unaffected turned without hesitation, heading back to the well. The animals herded them, guiding them into the darkness. The stag pushed soil over the opening. The creepers were knitting themselves back into place.

In the end, the well looked older than the forest itself.

Epilogue

Epilogue – The Transference

Your body lay beneath the roots of the oldest tree in the forest. The eagle perched above you, silent. The animals gathered in a circle, unmoving.

The successor knelt beside you, his hand trembling as it hovered over your chest. The Sudarshana Chakra still swirled behind him — not fading, but intensifying. Black and silver energy spun faster, forming a perfect disc behind his back.

And then — the forest dissolved. He was no longer in the clearing. He was standing in an **alternate world**—a realm of light and shadow, where time moved sideways and memory had weight.

And there you were. Not dead. Not alive. But *waiting*.

Your form shimmered, half-light, half-presence. Your eyes met his, and he understood: This was not the end. This was the *moment*.

He stepped forward, slowly, reverently. The Chakra spun behind him, casting rings of light across the void. He reached

out — not with desperation, but with purpose. And his hand touched your chest.

The moment his palm met your heart, the Chakra roared. Light surged through both of you. The forest in the real world shook. The eagle cried out. The wolves howled. The stag reared.

And your soul moved. Not upward. Not outward. But *inward*.

Into him.

He gasped, falling back into his body. The forest returned. The animals watched. The Chakra slowed, then settled behind him like a crown.

He stood. Not a successor but a Keeper. But the *continuation* of you.

And somewhere, deep in the earth, the well pulsed once — as if it knew that the storm was still watching.